

CONGRATULATING DEPUTY SECRETARY DOUG HOUSE ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 14, 2021*

Mrs. BUSTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Doug House, who is retiring as Deputy Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation after two and a half years of service.

Throughout his life, in every action he has undertaken, Mr. House has selflessly served the public in pursuit of delivering a better Illinois. He has always been a fighter for meaningful change and produced real results for Illinoisans. His journey began in the Quad Cities region, when he graduated from Rockridge High School in Taylor Ridge, Illinois. Mr. House became a Staff Sergeant in the 182nd Airlift Wing of the Illinois Air National Guard in Peoria in 1980. He joined the 682nd Engineer Battalion of the U.S. Army Reserve in 1983, where he helped train heavy construction equipment operators to build roads until his honorable discharge in 1986. Mr. House's commitment to revitalize our state's infrastructure was only beginning and would stay with him over the next four decades. He oversaw the progress of many public works projects while presiding over the Illinois Chapter of the American Public Works Association. Mr. House, an advocate for workers' rights, was named to The Indiana, Illinois, Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting as a construction analyst in 2016. In April 2019, he was hired as Deputy Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation. One of his proudest moments was being in Moline, Illinois on December 1, 2021 for the opening of the I-74 Bridge, which will symbolize the hard-working spirit of our region for generations to come.

It is because of diligent and noble leaders such as Doug House that I am especially proud to serve Illinois' 17th Congressional District. Madam Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Doug House on his two and a half years of service as Deputy Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF JOHN AND PHYLLIS HILL

### HON. RALPH NORMAN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 14, 2021*

Mr. NORMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and service of John Leroy Hill and Phyllis Lynn Stringfield Hill.

John Leroy Hill was born on December 7, 1953 in Cowpens, South Carolina. A true American hero, John joined the U.S. Army in 1970 and bravely served our country for two decades. During this time, John served two tours in Korea, two tours in Germany, and

tours in Fort Bragg, Fort Hood, and Fort Ord. He retired as a First Sergeant on January 1, 1991.

John met his wife Phyllis while he was on recruiting duty in Warsaw, Indiana. The two were married on January 23, 1991. Known as hometown heroes, both John and Phyllis are deeply involved and engaged members in their community. John has been the Commander of the Clover Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6732 since 2008. He was also the Commander of the Clover American Legion Post 38 until he was relieved by John Mattingly earlier this year. Phyllis worked with Crystalen Mattingly to form a Ladies Auxiliary for the American Legion Post 38.

In February of 2019, Phyllis retired and wanted to spend time traveling. While on an Alaskan cruise, Phyllis learned that she had a malignant mass. After further testing at the Levine Cancer Institute in Charlotte, North Carolina, the mass was shown to be cancerous. After being diagnosed with an aggressive Stage 4 cancer, Phyllis was informed in June of 2020 that she had only three to nine months to live. She courageously underwent radiation and chemotherapy treatments every day for six weeks. Throughout this entire ordeal, Phyllis has remained a positive and faithful believer of God's healing powers.

Despite her devastating prognosis, Phyllis recently received remarkable news. On December 2nd, while at a monthly follow-up appointment, her doctor informed her that he could no longer see any cancer in her CT scans. Her team of doctors were baffled as to how the cancer had disappeared. Phyllis told them it was her deep and honest belief in God that led her through this.

On behalf of the 5th District of South Carolina, I thank John and Phyllis for their incredible service, and I commend them for their unwavering faith in the Lord. These two are an inspiration to us all. May God continue to bless them and their family.

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF WESTFIELD FIRE CHIEF MARCUS REED

### HON. VICTORIA SPARTZ

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 14, 2021*

Mrs. SPARTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Fire Chief Marcus Reed of Westfield, Indiana, on the occasion of his retirement after a long tenure of public service.

Chief Reed has spent the last five years as the Chief of the Westfield Fire Department following over two decades of fire department leadership around the country before that. His retirement will be a big loss for the community of Westfield and Hamilton County but a well-deserved reward for his tireless service to keep his neighbors safe through emergency response, training, and prevention.

I thank Chief Marcus Reed for his dedicated public service. Our community is grateful for his leadership and his long career in public safety.

RECOGNIZING THE SCOTT CENTRAL REBELS AS MHSAA 2A STATE CHAMPIONS

### HON. MICHAEL GUEST

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 14, 2021*

Mr. GUEST. Madam Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Scott Central Rebels and Coach Eric House on their MHSAA 2A State Championship victory. Coach House led the Rebels to an almost unchallenged 15-0 season with huge margins of victory over their opponents, ending the season with a MHSAA record-breaking 72 points in the championship game. I commend Coach House for his success at the helm of the Rebels football team and wish him and his team continued success in the future.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to the young men who worked tirelessly for the championship trophy. Every early morning, every extra rep, and every sacrifice they made to better themselves and their team has resulted in the top prize.

In the coming days, as the thrill of victory begins to fade, I would encourage those young men to reflect deeply on the investment they made to realize this championship. They will never forget the feeling of their great accomplishment; but in the future, as they reminisce on this victory, I would challenge them to remember the qualities that made them champions.

Those qualities of hard-work, commitment, and determination will continue to serve them well in the future as they transition from leaders on the field to leaders in their families, communities, state, and Nation.

Congratulations to the Scott Central Rebels. They earned this victory.

CONGRATULATIONS COACH LOU HOLTZ

### HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 14, 2021*

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, congratulations Coach Lou Holtz for being awarded the Contributions to College Football Award from the National College Football Awards Association (NCFAA).

The purpose of the NCFAA is to enhance the integrity, influence, and prestige of college football's various awards.

Coach Holtz is the only college football coach to lead six different football programs to bowl games and the only one to lead four programs to the final top 20 rankings. The University of South Carolina cherish his dedicated service and success in Columbia. He defined college football and will forever be invoked in this era. Coach Holtz was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame on May 1, 2008.

CHAPEL OAKS V.F.D. 75TH ANNIVERSARY & GORHAM FAMILY TRIBUTE

**HON. ANTHONY G. BROWN**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 14, 2021*

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 75th Anniversary of The Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Department and pay tribute to Leroy and Lillian Gorham's first born children; Jean, Ruth and Leroy, Jr. On Saturday August 23, 1946 these children perished in a house fire at 1302 51st Street in the Prince George's County Community of Deanwood Park. The tragic loss of these three young lives was the cause for the establishment of The Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Department; Maryland's First All-African American Fire Company. Jean had just celebrated her 5th birthday and was slated to attend kindergarten in the fall, Ruth was a typical 2-year-old toddler and Leroy, Jr. was 11-months old and had taken his first unassisted steps that day. The Gorham family lived in the middle unit of a 3-unit house, where the fire engulfed all 3 units of the house. Neighbor and good friend Roy Lee Jordan attempted to save the children, but was unsuccessful.

The first fire department on the scene that day was from the District of Columbia. With the fire hydrant connections not being compatible, Engine Company 27 had to run their hoses across the busy thoroughfare of Eastern Ave. from the District of Columbia side to the Maryland side. According to those in the community, the nearby white fire stations in Maryland, which were minutes away from the Gorham's home, often responded slowly or not at all to emergencies in the surrounding African American communities.

The loss of his three children in a house fire was the motivation behind Mr. Gorham and his friend Roy Lee Jordan's personal mission to form a fire department and spare others the pain he suffered firsthand. Mobilized by this tragedy and determined not to let another person perish because of the racial discord, before the end of the year without any formal knowledge, experience or equipment; Mr. Gorham and Mr. Jordan along with members of the Deanwood Park and Chapel Oaks Communities founded the Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Department.

They started out in the 5700 Block of Sheriff Road in a barn rented to them by Ms. Eleanor Dodson, where they operated a small used fire engine. By August of 1947 the next year, they had a fire engine and a fire truck on Sheriff Road. Just as they were starting to make headway, in September a fire started in their makeshift firehouse; causing major damage to the building and damaging their second fire engine that was under repair. Not to be discouraged, the men of this community worked evenings and weekends mixing mortar and laying bricks to build a cinder block building with their own hands to replace the old barn that was destroyed.

This experience showed the men of this community that delivery of emergency services was not only a need, but a calling to fulfill. It was this innate spirit that they often had to lean on for strength to overcome the challenges and roadblocks they were faced with. They had to put up with blatant racial discrimi-

nation. They were called racial slurs and spat on. And orders given by Black fire officers being ignored by white fire fighters.

Other fire companies supported Chapel Oaks privately, secretly leaving their old equipment at the firehouse when no one was around or selling their used fire engines.

Chapel Oaks also had to deal with the fact that the county fire association only accepted white males and Chapel Oaks VFD did not receive official calls. Yet they responded to alerts by their neighbors and often arrived before the officially dispatched units. It was routine for these fire fighters to respond to calls in their area without being dispatched. This level of dedication was a commendable, but it came at a cost. There were attempts to run their engines off the road while responding to a call and other fire companies taking credit for rescues made by Chapel Oaks was commonplace.

To meet the requirements to have two Class A fire service vehicles, this resilient group of men and grateful community put on bake sales, sold dinners, had carnival and held various fundraisers to raise money to buy a new fire engine. One volunteer was a businessman who put up his gas station as collateral, nine others took out second mortgages on their homes to support the effort to buy their first piece of new fire apparatus, a 1957 FWD.

Property at 5312 Sheriff Rd. was purchased for the organization by Mr. Charles Lancaster and the members once again set out to build their new firehouse. Eleven years after being formed in December 1957 Chapel Oaks VFD had a brand-new engine, to move into their newly constructed firehouse that they owned and still own to this day.

A decade and a half after being inspired to train and equip themselves, raising fund to buy their own vehicles, and building two firehouses. You would think that Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Department would have done enough to have proven their commitment to the fire service and their value to the county. This was not the case as they entered the 1960's and they were still not members of the Prince Georges' County Fireman's Association. Membership in this organization was important not only because of the network of fire fighters to glean information from and the official training opportunities; but most important was the eligibility to share in the county fire tax that would pay for operating expenses. Chapel Oaks had to petition the state legislature for a share of the fire tax-receiving 7 percent to other stations 31 percent-and residents complained that their local company was not automatically dispatched.

Almost 25 years since the tragic Deanwood Park fire, in March of 1971, Chapel Oaks was fed up with the obvious discrimination and filed suit against Prince George's County. The suit alleged noncompliance with the call system and the need for a new firehouse. At the time, equipment had broken down that impaired response times to its constituents and the station sought emergency funding from the county. Willie Rodney, Fire Station 38's chief at the time, summed up the frustration with the need for the lawsuit. "We do the same job and come to the same standards as the other companies. But all we've been getting are promises, promises, promises."

County Executive William W. Gallett threatened to withhold the request for emergency funding because of the pending lawsuit. The

county council granted the funding. By 1980 a new station was built and Chapel Oaks Prince George's County Fire Department included them in their system by designating the Engine No. 38. They also became members of the volunteer association attending annual convention, winning many parade trophies and garnering much deserved respect for their accomplishments.

Chapel Oaks has been a great asset to the community not only for delivery of emergency services, but the numerous lives that have been enhanced by their experience after serving with Chapel Oaks. Among them are Mr. Luther Cruchfield who was the First African American to be hired by Prince George's County Fire Department and Retired Fire Inspector Lenard Lewis was hired later and became the first African American to be promoted. There also was a young teen named Johnathan Bolden who just hung around the firehouse giving him something productive to do. Now a local businessman he has served in many positions at Chapel Oaks, VFD including Chief. As one of the few African American instructors he has filled a vital role at the University of Maryland College Park Fire Rescue Institute, and is a Prince Georges' County Fire Commissioner. He credits Chapel Oaks and the fire fighters there for nurturing his interest in the fire service and setting the foundation for his work ethic. There are generations of fire fighters serving in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia fire departments that have been motivated, trained and mentored by The Chapel Oaks Fire VFD. They can always use good people and are excited about the opportunity to find new recruits, welcome them in the Chapel Oaks Family and train another generation of fire fighters.

The tragic death of Jean, Ruth and Leroy, Jr. was the driving force for their parents to create a legacy for them. They were determined that their children's death would not be in vain. Mr. Gorham held numerous offices during his 54-year career at the Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Department, including Chief, President and Chairman of the Board. He was a very active life member. His wife Lillian was also a member of the Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary in the early years of its formation. With this year being the 75th Anniversary of the tragic fire which took these three young lives. I would like to pay tribute to Jean Gorham, Ruth Gorham and Leroy Gorham, Jr. They have done more in their death than many get to do in their lives. I would like to acknowledge the strength of their parents Leroy and Lillian Gorham. I would also like to recognize Mr. Roy Lee Jordan for his heroism and bravery, along with his determination to assist in the legacy of the three children that he was unable to save. I would be remiss not to commend the aforementioned communities and the countless numbers of people who have helped build, grow and maintain Chapel Oaks Volunteer Fire Department. In addition, I want to thank the current leadership of Engine 38 "The Oaks" as they continue to provide services to Prince George's County. On this 75th Anniversary I wish all the best to future members of Engine 38 and their contributions to the fire service and Prince George's County.